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House Republicans Lose in Nicaragua Debate

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WASHINGTON, June 6 — The House Foreign Affairs Committee today rejected two Republican attempts to dilute a proposed ban on covert aid to Nicaraguan rebels, and Democrats failed in efforts to negotiate a compromise with Administration officials.

The committee rejected, in a 21-12 vote along party lines, a Republican amendment that would have banned covert aid to the rebels only after Nicaragua stopped aiding rebels in El Salvador and other neighboring countries.

The committee then rejected, 18-13, another Republican amendment that would have ended covert aid when Nicaragua began to negotiate with opposition forces and halted what the amendment called violations of human and political rights.

The votes reflected growing concern in Congress over covert activities in Central America and the committee's resentment of what some members think is the inflexibility of the Administration. Democrats said they would make a final effort to arrive at some accommodation with the White House.

The votes followed a three-hour debate that was closed to the public despite the objections of the committee's Republicans, who said the Democrats were unwilling to let the people watch them sell out Central America. But Democrats said the debate would involve classified information from intelligence officials and later said that had proved to be the case.

The House intelligence committee has already approved a ban on all covert aid to Nicaragua, but the House Foreign Affairs Committee has concurrent jurisdiction. Democrats on the committee sought a compromise to avoid opening themselves to charges of undermining the President and being responsible for any increase in leftist governments in Central America.

The case against continued covert aid was made by Representative Lee E. Hamilton, Democrat of Indiana, who had been negotiating with State Department officials on a compromise.

"There is very little evidence that this covert action has been effective," Mr. Hamilton said at an open session after the closed meeting. "It has not prevented the flow of arms into El Salvador. It has enabled the Sandinistas to rally support in the country."

"It undercuts the U.S. image in the world as a nation that acts legally, fairly, decently and overtly," he said. "It risks a wider war and makes it more difficult for the U.S. to support negotia-

tions."

But Representative Gerald B.E. Solomon, Republican of New York, charged, "This committee is about to sell the U.S.A. down the drain by aiding and abetting the spread of Communism." Similarly, Representative Henry J. Hyde, Republican of Illinois, said, "We're going to make it safe to be a Communist guerilla in El Salvador but terminal to be fighting in the hills of Nicaragua."

Meanwhile, 12 House members led by Representative Jim Wright of Texas, the majority leader, called upon Daniel Ortega Saavedra, the head of Nicaragua's Government, to negotiate with opposition forces.

Those signing the letter were Representatives Hamilton, Wright, Michael D. Barnes of Maryland, Dante B. Fascell of Florida, Clement J. Zablocki of Wisconsin, Stephen J. Solarz of Brooklyn, Robert G. Torricelli of Bergen County, N.J., Barbara A. Mikulski of Maryland, Bill Alexander of Arkansas, Gus Yatron of Pennsylvania, Fortney H. Stark of California and Jim Leach of Iowa. Mr. Leach was the only Republican.

The leaders of rival Nicaraguan rebel factions were in Washington to lobby against the end of covert aid. The rebel leaders — Alfonso Robelo Callejas and Adolfo Calero — predicted victory over the Sandinist Government by Christmas if their forces received the aid they need.

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